

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:DAKORN:HLK

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NEA - MR. ATHERTON

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S/S - MR BARNES

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 199724

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANON/ISRAEL

REF: BEIRUT 11884

1. AMBASSADOR KABBANI CALLED ON DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON AFTERNOON OCTOBER 7 ON INSTRUCTIONS TO INFORM USG OF INCIDENT REPORTED REFTEL. KABBANI SAID ISRAELIS HAD ASKED FOR ILMAC MEETING AT 6:00 PM, OCTOBER 6, AFTER SYRIAN PLANE HAD MADE FORCED LANDING AT RAYAK EARLIER THAT AFTERNOON. KABBANI DESCRIBED ATTITUDE OF ISRAELIS AS "VIOLENT AND ARROGANT." SAID ISRAELI SIDE GAVE LEBANESE A PAPER WHICH STARTED WITH WORD "ULTIMATUM" AND WARNED ANY AID LEBANON GIVES TO ARAB STATES WILL BE CONSIDERED BY ISRAEL AS AGGRESSION, AND ISRAEL WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY. KABBANI SAID GOL REJECTED ULTIMATUM AND HAS INFORMED AMBASSADORS OF COUNTRIES

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PERMANENT MEMBERS OF SECURITY COUNCIL OF ISRAELI DEMARCHE.

2. KABBANI SAID PRESIDENT FRANGIE HAD EARLIER CALLED CAIRO AND DAMASCUS AND ASKED WHAT HELP LEBANON COULD

OFFER. WHAT FRANGIE MEANT, KABBANI STRESSED, WAS SOLELY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. SADAT HAD ASKED FOR MEDICAL HELP, AND FRANGIE HAD SENT A LEBANESE DOCTOR. KABBANI EMPHASIZED LEBANON DOES NOT INTEND TO TAKE PART IN HOSTILITIES IN ANY WAY; IT CONSIDERS ITSELF BOUND BY 1949 ARMISTICE AGREEMENT. LEBANON SUPPORTS RIGHT OF ARAB STATES TO GET BACK THEIR TERRITORY, AND RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS, BUT DOES NOT INTEND TO GET INVOLVED IN FIGHTING.

3. KABBANI RECALLED USG EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR LEBANON. SAID USG ASSURANCES OF SUPPORT ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO LEBANON, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF ISRAELI ATTITUDE HE HAD RELATED.

4. ATHERTON SAID WE UNDERSTAND DILEMMA AND DIFFICULTY CURRENT SITUATION CAUSES LEBANON. WE APPRECIATE AND VALUE ASSURANCE THAT GOL HAS NO INTENTION OF BECOMING PARTY TO MILITARY CONFLICT; THIS IS VERY WISE COURSE. ATHERTON SAID WE WERE AWARE OF ISRAELI DEMARCHE FROM EMBASSY BEIRUT AND HAVE GOL REQUEST FOR HELP IN URGING ISRAELI RESTRAINT UNDER CONSIDERATION. GIVEN PRESS OF MANY MATTERS OF HIGH PRIORITY, INCLUDING THIS ONE, ON SENIOR DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS, HE NOT IN POSITION TO SAY MORE AT THIS TIME, EXCEPT THAT WE WOULD VERY MUCH REGRET ANY MILITARY ACTION INVOLVING LEBANON. ATHERTON NOTED THAT WE DO HAVE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION WITH VIEW STATED BY KABBANI RE RIGHTS OF ARAB STATES TO TAKE ACTION TO REGAIN THEIR TERRITORIES, IF BY THIS IT IS MEANT MILITARY ACTION, SINCE USG SUPPORTS 1967 CEASEFIRE AND NEGOTIATIONS.

5. KABBANI THEN RAISED QUESTION AS TO WHICH SIDE HAD INITIATED HOSTILITIES, SAYING THIS WAS STILL UNCLEAR. ATHERTON SAID THAT WHEN FIGHTING STARTED WE RESERVED OUR JUDGMENT AS TO HOW IT STARTED AND HAVE CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN THIS POSITION IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS. HOWEVER,
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ATHERTON SAID HE COULD TELL AMBASSADOR CONFIDENTIALLY AND FOR HIS GOVERNMENT'S INFORMATION ONLY THAT WE HAVE STUDIED MATTER CAREFULLY AND ARE NOW QUITE PERSUADED THAT EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS CARRIED OUT A COORDINATED ATTACK. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT ISRAEL WAS PREPARED FOR ANY ACTION, AND IT APPEARS ISRAELI FORCES WERE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE. KABBANI RECALLED THAT IN DAYS PRECEDING OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING THERE HAD BEEN PRESS REPORTS OF ISRAELI BUILD-UP ON SYRIAN BORDER AND SAID SYRIANS HAD BEEN VERY CONCERNED. ATHERTON SAID WE HAD CHECKED THESE REPORTS AT TIME AND HAD FOUND THAT THERE WAS NO ISRAELI MILITARY ACTIVITY OF ANY SIGNIFICANCE IN SYRIAN BORDER PRIOR TO OCTOBER 6. KISSINGER

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